A Tropical Odyssey in Central America

From **28/12/2023** to **07/01/2024**	Ship: ***LE DUMONT-D'URVILLE***	From **Belize City** to **Colón**



On this **all-new 11-day expedition cruise** aboard *Le Dumont-d'Urville*, you will sail the Caribbean Sea discovering the lush landscapes of Central America, exploring the region's historical cities to learn more about their history, sharing with the local populations and creating unforgettable memories.

Culture and heritage are on the programme of your journey. The city of **Santo Tomás de Castilla** will welcome you for a glimpse into incredible Maya history, with the possibility of discovering the pyramids and sanctuaries of the Quiriguá archaeological site, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

From one port of call to the next, you will also be able to seize the opportunity to share unforgettable moments with local communities. **La Ceiba,** a brand-new and exclusive PONANT port of call, is undoubtedly a highlight of your journey. Both you and your welcoming local hosts will discover how emotional first encounters may be, with traditional dancing derived from Honduran folklore and unique moments of sharing, both on land and on board. A little further, in Panama, on the **Bocas del Toro** archipelago, famous for its rich underwater and terrestrial biodiversity, you will learn about a different history, that of the country's largest indigenous community, the Ngöbe-Buglé.

Fans of swimming and snorkelling will certainly not be disappointed, given the magnificent fine sandy beaches surrounded by the crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean Sea on **Corn Island** or the coconut forests and coral reefs of the splendid **Water Caye**. The extraordinary diversity of the landscapes will surprise you throughout your journey. From **Puerto Limon**, you will access the **Tortuguero National Park** with its maze-like canals and rich biodiversity, as well as the **Cahuita National Park**, where you will be able to observe abundant wildlife. The region is also home to many mangroves, this unique ecosystem in which intertwined roots plunge into tropical waters, enabling you to contemplate a palette of greens. Zodiac outings on the **Rio Dulce** will let you discover this fascinating world, with insight provided by the experienced team of naturalist-guides.



The information in this document is valid as of 29/03/2024

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YOUR STOPOVERS :

BELIZE CITY

Embarkation 28/12/2023 from 16:00 to 17:00
Departure 28/12/2023 at 18:00

Belize City is the former capital and the country's largest town. Located on the **Caribbean Sea**, this lively little town symbolises the fusion of British, Spanish and Maya cultures. The departure point for **flights over the Great Blue Hole and the barrier reef**, it's also the ideal gateway for discovering the treasures of Maya architecture: in the heart of the jungle, the grandiose and mysterious ruins of temples and palaces at the Lamanai and Xunantunich sites await you. Another unmissable experience: a trip to the mouth of the **Belize River**: with a little luck and care, you'll get a glimpse of manatees, dolphins, crocodiles, iguanas and many aquatic bird species.

DULCE RIVER

Arrival 29/12/2023
Departure 29/12/2023

In the waters of the Rio Dulce flows a part of the Caribbean soul. *Lanchas*, the motor boats that travel along the river and the **Caribbean Sea**, are the only way of reaching this small, welcoming town with no overland access to the rest of the country. Here, you are in Garifuna country: the inhabitants, descendent from Jamaican slaves, perpetuate their culture through oral tradition and ceremonies. **Garifuna music**, which is lively and sounds similar in some respects to reggae, and Garifuna dance, to the beat of drums, **have both been classified by UNESCO as "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity**".

SANTO TOMÁS DE CASTILLA

Arrival 30/12/2023
Departure 30/12/2023

A port city located in the north-east of **Guatemala**, on the coast of the Amatique Bay, Santo Tomás de Castilla offers exceptional access to the **fabulous Mayan archaeological site of Quiriguá**. Listed as a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site since 1981, this place takes you back in time, deep into a décor of ruins and vestiges from the 8th century.

LA CEIBA

Arrival 31/12/2023
Departure 31/12/2023

La Ceiba, a brand-new and exclusive PONANT port of call, owes its name to the eponymous and enormous tree, one so magnificent that the local people - the **Garifuna** - considered it to be the "staircase used by God to descend from Heaven to visit the Earth". La Ceiba possesses a multitude of natural wonders like this tree and you will have the

possibility of discovering them during a river excursion into the surrounding **mangrove**, at the heart of **Pico Bonito National Park**. Howler monkeys, Panamanian white-faced capuchins, manatees, alligators, anteaters, great blue herons and toucans have all taken up residence here. The exceptional hospitality of La Ceiba's inhabitants comes naturally here; you will experience it as soon as you arrive on the pier. You will also enjoy an exceptional encounter with the local community of Cuero y Salado – which you will reach in a *burra*, a traditional Honduran railcar once used for banana transport – and learn about its history tied to the banana industry. *"When we arrive in this village on the edge of this extraordinary mangrove, we are captivated by the way of life that rules over these lands. The local people have customs and traditions, and they welcome us with folkloric singing and dancing, before we experience an unforgettable moment in this still unspoiled and pristine environment" ,* says José Sarica, our Director of Expedition Cruise Design.

WATER CAYE, ISLA UTILA

Arrival 01/01/2024
Departure 01/01/2024

The **Bay Islands** archipelago is home to stunning cays, sheltered **coral islets** with warm, crystal-clear turquoise waters. Off the island of Utila, the white-sand beaches lined with palms and coconut trees and the reefs of the deserted islet called **Water Caye** offer a picture-postcard setting that will delight fans of swimming and snorkelling.

AT SEA

Arrival 02/01/2024
Departure 02/01/2024

During your journey at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This journey without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, depending on the activities offered, or to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

CORN ISLAND

Arrival 03/01/2024
Departure 03/01/2024

A little slice of paradise lying off the coast of Nicaragua, in the warm waters of the **Caribbean Sea**, the Corn Islands are an invitation to leisure as well as exploration. The **long white sandy beaches** lined with coconut palms promise enjoyable moments of relaxation while the hills, covered with thick tropical forest, and the surrounding turquoise waters, teeming with life, will delight hikers and divers. Countless multicoloured fish, nurse sharks, sand tiger sharks, rays and barracudas can be seen in the **sumptuous coral reefs and underwater caves.**

PUERTO LIMÓN

Arrival 04/01/2024
Departure 04/01/2024

We're pretty sure the little coastal town of Puerto Limón will completely win your heart. It is located on the Caribbean sea. Just beyond the harbour, **Playa Bonita creek** opens its arms to a haven of beauty rimmed by clear blue waters and shaded by giant peach-palms. If you wish to explore the lush green areas in the town, it's worth taking a stroll through the lemon groves that give Puerto Limón its name. You'll have all the time in the world to mosey around the streets scattered with **multicoloured wooden makeshift stalls.** These makeshift bars with their raffia roofs offer fresh juices blended just for you.

BOCAS DEL TORO

Arrival 05/01/2024
Departure 06/01/2024

Heavenly stretches of beach with opalescent sand, virgin rainforest, traditional houses in flamboyant colours... the **Bocas del Toro** Archipelago welcomes you in a gentle, typically Caribbean atmosphere. Anchored to the north-west coast of Panama, this lush and wild Eden is composed of nine main islands surrounded by thousands of verdant islets. Boasting a rich biodiversity, this lost paradise is home to the only national marine park in Panama: **Isla Bastimentos**. This stunning reserve protects an exceptional marine ecosystem composed of a **rich coral reef**, more than 200 species of colourful fish, and a population of bottlenose dolphins that live here permanently. On **Isla Popa**, meet the **Ngöbe-Bugle**, an indigenous community of Panama that still lives according to its ancestral traditions.

COLÓN

Arrival 07/01/2024 early morning
Disembarkation 07/01/2024 at 07:00

Colón is the second largest city in **Panama**, at the Caribbean entrance of the **Panama Canal**. Colón is today an important port, and the free trade zone created in 1953 contributed greatly to the development of the city. Colón was founded in 1850 by Americans working on the Panama railroad connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts through the isthmus of Panama; the city rapidly overshadowed the older **Caribbean** ports of Panama when the canal opened.